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REPORT ON OTHER MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Note by the secretariat

Contribution by the International Centre of Sociological, Penal and Penitentiary Research and Studies

The attention of the Preparatory Committee is drawn to the attached contribution, entitled "The Mediterranean Conference on Human Rights - Summary report".

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MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Summary report

The Mediterranean Conference, which will be ending this morning, has discussed an agenda that consisted of three main topics.

As I had occasion to say in my introductory statement on the first day, the goal of the Conference was not to deal with all human rights problems in their entirety, problems that arise both in the Mediterranean basin and elsewhere, but to focus on certain matters which have a special meaning in the Mediterranean area. This does not mean that we have overlooked other problems, but that in order to try to achieve some results, even if only in comparing ideas, we have chosen the topics that lent themselves to thorough treatment.

In the last three days there have been 25 basic reports and over five hours of statements, as well as naturally, the general debate this morning.

It is certainly not easy to summarize, in such a short time, three days of such intensive work, and if I tried to do so I might leave out many of the arguments put forward. In this report, therefore, I will attempt to summarize what was said and stress the particularly important points that emerged in the reports and were taken up in the discussions.

The first topic dealt with in the Conference was the right to development, with the focus mainly on the right to work and in particular on the protection of immigrant workers. In the introductory statement, Mr. Fausto Pocar explained that the right to development represents a synthesis of all human rights rather than an additional right, for it encompasses all human rights belonging to the first, second and third generation.

The next two reports, by Professor Mebroukine and Professor El Hajje, took up the problem of development with man, the individual, as the focal point. Mr. El Hajjé stressed the fact that human beings lie at the core of any development movement. Reference was made to the new international economic order and the contribution by certain Mediterranean States to the pursuit of development.

Hence, the right to development and a country's economic system are interrelated, especially in the particularly sensitive phases of transition from one political and economic regime to another. Some southern Mediterranean and North African countries in particular are in a vulnerable political and economic situation because they are undergoing a period of transition. For this reason, the attention of the major international organizations was drawn to the fact that they should not place too much emphasis on the internal changes that should be made in northern Mediterranean countries so as to avoid ruining a delicate balance that is developing positively, or reviving fundamentalist movements that would certainly represent a step backwards in the process under way.

We must demand autonomy for countries - this was stressed by all rapporteurs nearly in unison - in reconstructing their own systems with the help of other countries in the region, but through autonomous development, a development from within that draws its strength from inside the country itself and is not imposed or driven from the outside.

Speakers made it clear that development, viewed as the right to development, is a global process that is not only economic, but concerns an individual's social and cultural development, etc. ... In this context, the extent to which human rights are protected and respected might even become a standard, a benchmark in evaluating and measuring the capacity for development and the results achieved.

The proposals made in this part of the debate included the establishment of a joint body for the development coordination between the countries of the Mediterranean area; there were proposals for legislative measures in each country, and even, for the purpose of improving the protection of economic, social and cultural rights, an additional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in keeping with the existing Protocol for civil and political rights.

Once the preliminary phase, which served to introduce the main topic, was over, the reports dealt with the specific issue of the protection of workers.

The reports by Professor Koukiadis, Professor El Borai, Professor Juste Ruiz, Professor Castillo and Professor Bruschi all focused on this topic, naturally from different points of view.

In the reports by our colleagues from the University of Valencia the problem of work was approached from the standpoint of the European Social Charter; a critical illustration of the Charter showed that it is not, on the whole, binding on States; there is great flexibility in the commitments that States choose to make, the effect of the monitoring mechanisms is limited, and so on. The same may be said for the Additional Protocol to the Social Charter and even the Community Charter, i.e. that of the European Communities, on social rights. It is true that the European integration process, first in the Single European Act and later in the Maastricht Treaty, includes the social aspect among the main problems in European cooperation, but it is also true that solutions have still to be achieved. The Maastricht Treaty still has to be ratified in order to enter into force, and in any case there would still be territorial limits on the application of these rules, which, although they concern the member States of the European Community, certainly do not cover the Mediterranean basin with which we are concerned today.

The specific problem of the differing treatment accorded legal immigrant workers and illegal workers was attacked especially vigorously by Professor El Borai, who stressed the most crucial aspects by referring to immigrant workers in the Arab countries in general. He mentioned the particularly harsh measures towards, or rather borne by, immigrant workers, such as the emigration tax, the heavy deductions on money sent home by emigrants from abroad, discrimination in housing, working hours, etc. He also spoke of an institution, fortunately applied in only a few countries, requiring the presence of a guarantor. Mention was also made of the "Kafil",

an institution requiring the presence of an individual acting as guarantor for the immigrant worker, who practically loses his status as a subject of law and is completely abandoned if the guarantor does not keep his word.

The debate that followed showed how this situation, which has even been compared to a modern form of slavery, is in fact rarely applied in countries of the Mediterranean basin, although it does exist elsewhere.

The topic of the contrast between legal or illegal workers was also taken up by Professor Koukiadis. He first referred to the international situation and then to the system in force in Greece, in which context he spoke of the discrimination that exists but that, as we all know, is also a feature of nearly all countries. He condemned some of the most unpleasant aspects of the discrimination and again stressed the lack of coordination in this regard.

As I have already said, the question of differing treatment was dealt with both by the European Mediterranean countries and the Islamic Mediterranean countries, and the debate confirmed that, at least as far as these issues go, the traditional opposition between the West and Islam has no meaning. The problem of discrimination among immigrant workers is a problem found in all Mediterranean societies. It is not particularly different in the Islamic countries from the western European countries.

Professor Bruschi's report, which also dealt with the topic of emigration, touched upon a special aspect: the advantage for migrant workers to becoming integrated in the State where they are living for work reasons: the "settling process". This desire to stay in a country is often an obstacle, because of measures which, sometimes for obvious reasons of public policy, lead to the expulsion of workers or prevent families from being reunited. This brings up another aspect of the question, which is protection of workers. In this context, the Bruschi report tends to propose that the work actually done should be a criterion for acquiring the right or for evaluating the possibility of granting the right to remain in a country. He also proposes multilateral institutions at the Mediterranean level to protect migrant workers.

The debate that followed shows how appropriate such institutions would be, not only for the protection of workers but also for better coordination of economic-based emigration in numerous countries, as Mr. Bennani was telling us this morning.

Under another topic, we heard a report by our colleague Mr. Potocsnjak about the right to strike. It is true that this topic was not explored further in the ensuing discussion, but it is just as true that Mr. Potocsnjak's theory, namely that the right to strike should be considered a fundamental human right, was probably not the subject of sufficient consensus, given the brevity of the discussion afterwards. In actual fact, the right to strike presupposes effective labour regulations, without which it cannot be introduced as a tool for the recognition of the fact that the rights deriving from such regulations must be protected.

On the contrary, in the discussion that preceded this statement, the right to work was viewed from the most basic standpoint, i.e. the right to do

a job, regardless of regulations governing the job itself - regulations which, at least from what appeared to emerge from this Conference, remain within the competence of the State, although, as was often stressed, they must observe human rights.

The topic of emigration, dealt with both generally and also as discrimination between national workers and immigrant workers, was then taken up in the framework of the South-North migrations noted in recent years, i.e. emigration from North African countries towards European countries. The problem was dealt with first by Professor Belguendouz. He highlighted the motivation of people from these countries in emigrating towards mainland Europe. He condemned the commercial approach to this problem, which is to consider emigration as "labour supply" and immigration capacity as the opposite, namely "labour import". Without overemphasizing this import-export aspect, in which work is the commodity, Mr. Belguendouz asks us to consider the fact that, in the emigration-immigration relationship, not only the economic aspect must be taken into account, but there must be a social vision of the right to work and this is a social issue in the context of human rights.

Emigration from South to North is a structural phenomenon in Europe. All countries have experienced it. We have experienced it in Italy and Sicily, from where we are speaking. Now it is North African countries that are experiencing it. In reality precise European regulations are the missing element, I would even say that regulations are completely lacking or when they do exist, they are not clear. All this risks creating and has created tensions among the North African workers who come to Europe and among the European populations; tensions that may often verge on xenophobia. From the point of view of the North African countries, the situation is aggravated by the European Community policy. Professor Belguendouz referred to the protectionist approach of the European Community countries. He spoke of the Trevi group, which led to the Schengen and Dublin Agreements. The subsequent debate attempted to clarify these issues. Although it is true that these matters, dealt with essentially from the point of view of State security and public order, and thus chiefly by the Ministers of the Interior of the countries of the European Community, create huge difficulties for those who wish to emigrate from the countries of North Africa, as Mr. Tesauro told us in his closing report, it is even more true that the noble principles of human rights in the economic and social sector often have to reckon with harsh reality.

The European Community came into being as a closed economic entity; it has gradually expanded but nevertheless remains a closed circle designed to achieve a common trading zone. Clearly, at least until recent years, it is the economic aspect that has prevailed in the system. Social policy is evolving, but is still embryonic even now, although it should develop with the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty. We need to try and reconcile these divergent needs, the need of people in North Africa to emigrate to find work and the need to maintain a degree of economic stability among the EEC countries as a whole.

Castro Rial of the Complutensian University of Madrid explored the particular issue of workers and the status of immigrant workers in one

European country, namely Spain. She highlighted how Spanish legislation does not accept discrimination between Spanish and foreign workers. Nevertheless, after systematically analysing the various aspects, she had of necessity to differentiate, since we are clearly dealing with a Community country, between legislation concerning foreign workers who are Community citizens and legislation concerning workers from outside the Community.

Our Spanish colleague suggested that improved protection of immigrant workers could appropriately be achieved by means of training courses or institutes for them. Greater awareness among them of their position could certainly contribute to better employment protection.

The concluding report, by Mr. Tesauro, Advocate-General at the European Court of Justice, took Community law as a point of reference where, as he frequently pointed out we daily see the confrontation, or rather clash, between the needs of immigration on the one hand and the need for economic cohesion on the other. In the Community, there is a clear distinction between the regime applicable to Community workers, who, in accordance with the freedom of movement now more or less achieved, are assimilated to nationals, and workers from outside the community, who are plainly discriminated against on certain grounds that are essentially economic.

There are, admittedly, criticisms to be made about the social dimension of the problem, but as Mr. Tesauro reminded us, this lies in the fact that, in the Community context, there is in reality no social policy. Social policy is still delegated too much to Member States and thus varies from one country to another.

The process of European integration must also move in this direction, and this is one of the things, the Court of Justice has sought to do in some of its pronouncements, directing Community evolution. We were then reminded of particular cases under the association agreement with Turkey and the association agreements with the Maghreb countries: Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. The problem of reuniting families was also mentioned, a problem which in fact, despite action by the Court of Justice, is not yet completely ensured at the European level, because in such cases reliance is placed on the provisions in force in different countries. As I shall point out later, the problem was also explored in relation to the third topic, the position of women and children in society and was supplemented in the statement by Counsellor Genesio, who reminded us of the applicable principles - which it is hoped will be applied.

The second topic is cultural identity, and freedom of religion and education. Professor Rizman introduced the topic, arguing on the basis of cultural identity in general. He took a sociological approach, and rightly so, by emphasizing the principle of every community's right to a cultural identity, thus introducing from the outset, the problem to which he would return later, namely the problem of deciding whether it concerned an individual right, a collective right or the right of an individual exercised at the same time by other individuals.

Mr. Bennani's report, supplemented by today's statements, put forward again the broader theme of cultural identity. He showed the relationship and

ties between democracy and human rights. He underlined the interrelationship between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other, and thus drew attention to the need to avoid creating hierarchies in these rights, hierarchies sometimes used to avoid or prevent the enjoyment of such rights. He also pointed to the economic conditioning which jeopardizes the enjoyment of economic and social rights when those rights depend on the conduct of the public authorities, conduct which often even includes certain costs. All this is inevitably linked to the national economy. In this context, he again reminded us of the primary need to develop human rights education, which is essential to a cultural identity in an effort to achieve solidarity between countries of the north and the south. This does not necessarily mean moving towards unity between countries north and south of the Mediterranean. Differences do exist and must exist - there are even those who speak of the right to be different - but education and the culture of communities and peoples can certainly serve as a unifying factor between the Mediterranean countries.

The problem then shifted to the confrontation between Islam and the West. We need to promote dialogue in the perception of these two realities. The subject was addressed by Professor Ben Abid. He took as his starting point the results of the Cairo Islamic Conference in 1990. It served as an introduction to the problem, a long-standing memory for any human rights activist, of the contrast between universalism and regionalism in human rights. Is it true that human rights are universal, of equal value for all? Conversely, is it true that they must be differentiated, depending on various regional realities? The proposition, as we know, is an old one; as always it is first of all a matter of finding agreement on the meaning of the terms, because if we refer to a specific text and talk of a declaration or covenant in relation to the universality of human rights, it is clear that there will be objections. The Universal Declaration and the United Nations Covenants cannot be imposed on all communities and countries throughout the world, since in some countries they do not represent the universal concept of human rights which does nevertheless exist in all countries.

Mr. Bennani reminded us this morning that this potential conflict, perhaps a conflict of words, must be resolved by determining what the common nucleus actually is. We used to talk of the "core", the basic core of human rights which could really be considered universal, common to all men, because it is inherent in the individual from birth and thus the basic core which precludes diversity, regardless of the society or culture in which the individual lives.

None of this conflicts with particular situations or specific societies and cultures where human rights may have a particular meaning different from that adopted in other social contexts. We need to foster dialogue, but as we have said, dialogue does not necessarily force us all to combine in a single document written in a single act, be it a convention or something else. It must simply bring different positions closer to unity. It is in this context that the agreement, which has frequently been echoed, most closely touched Islamic law or at least the law progressively developed on the basis of the Koran. The Shariah, which was discussed, can have several interpretations. It is not necessarily a law with a single meaning, as some continental legislations can be, but one which can be interpreted in different ways. It

is possible to interpret the Shariah correctly, but in an evolutionary way, while respecting the principles of the Koran. There is no contradiction when the Shariah is interpreted in an evolutionary way. Hence the need for Islamic countries to agree, within their own countries, to develop existing legislation in such a way as to bring it closer to a more global and universal concept of rights, without this meaning the imposition of something from outside, intended to restrict the freedom and ideals of that type of culture.

It is true, as Professor Ben Abid reminded us, that, despite everything, there are differences between Islamic countries. Mention was made of the current situation in Tunisia compared to fundamentalist countries (Iran, Pakistan, etc...).

Starting with this confrontation between Islam and Western culture, the subject turned to the crux of the problem of freedom of religion. The report submitted by Mr. Vicelli and prepared in collaboration with Mr. Pettiti, who was to have been with us, emphasized the sources of the problem, how it is regulated under international law, existing instruments, the Convention, the Universal Declaration, the Covenants, regional conventions, etc... It was also proposed that further specific texts on freedom of religion, should be drafted, an idea which did not really enlist a great deal of support. In many quarters, it was said, as has already been maintained for a long time, there are probably too many texts on human rights which are not in any way reflected in reality, given the extremely limited or indeed non-existent application of human rights.

President Robert introduced the duality between secularity and religion. He recalled how this problem arises to a certain extent in countries with a Western European culture, particularly in France, but it cannot be posed, with the same elements and in the same terms, for countries with an Islamic culture. Starting with freedom of conscience, the secular State, according to President Robert, should demonstrate maximum tolerance for all religious beliefs, meaning that the State as a political and institutional mechanism should remain absolutely neutral with regard to religious beliefs.

Mr. TANOR explored the same subject to examine how it emerged in a country with a particular significance in the Mediterranean concept, since it was a traditionally Islamic country which then became partially Europeanized through the well-known revolution of Ataturk, who introduced the new culture of modern Turkey.

The Europeanization of the Turkish State made for constitutional protection of many human rights based on the example of European cultures. It is a well-known fact, and one which has been underlined, that Turkey has taken the basic codes and laws of certain European countries as a model. Nevertheless, the law still contains a legacy of certain Islamic principles which may contrast with the European type of legislation introduced in Turkey. Accordingly, there is still much to do, perhaps not so much in reforming the law, as in properly applying law which has sometimes been well drafted but not always so effectively implemented.

Father Joblin reminded us how, to achieve true freedom of religion, it is first necessary to be aware of the diversity of cultures and religions.

Freedom of religion means, above all, not imposing one's own religion on others, but starting from the premise that there are different religions. One cannot want unification, which is certainly contrary to history. We must just live together in mutual respect for different religious beliefs.

In the Mediterranean Basin, this basically means collaboration between the three main monotheistic religions in order to apply human rights to all peoples.

The first objective is thus to achieve religious freedom. To achieve this in practice, the approach proposed by Father Joblin is to avoid pressing on too far with judicial control procedures at the international or European level. Such procedures should be avoided. Instead, there should be non-judicial procedures, consisting of constructive comparison and discussion to bring diverse concepts closer together.

As relations between different religious persuasions develop, they can gradually start addressing several issues, including discrimination based on religion, practices which encourage or facilitate such discrimination, violation of the rights of the individual, relations between the civil and the religious authorities and so on, all within the context of constructive comparison between different realities which must be acknowledged and respected.

In the present circumstances dialogue between denominations should be aimed initially at learning about each other and then, if possible, at a rapprochement in an atmosphere of mutual respect. This could be done through existing bodies, the various NGOs which are working in the sector or in some other similar way.

The Rector of Tel Aviv University, Professor Yoram Dinstein, continued on the problem of freedom of religion, addressed here also in the broadest sense of the three monotheistic religions of the Mediterranean. He systematically analysed the substance of freedom of religion, dwelling on the primary aspect of the choice of religion, followed by the freedom to profess that religion, to teach it and to spread it.

At this point another issue arises here and harks back to preceding contrasts in doctrine, namely, whether the right to freedom of religion is a right of the individual which can or must be exercised in common, that is to say together with other individuals, or whether it is a right of the community as such, that is to say, a right which belongs to the religious community. The statements, in particular that by Mr. Koukiadis, examined the arguments in favour of these theories. Nevertheless, we know that in doctrinal terms there is no universal solution, and may be because, as always, the correct solution lies somewhere in the middle: there is certainly a right of the individual to freedom of religion but there is also probably a right of the community as such, particularly in the practice of rites which must be exercised in common.

The problem becomes more acute in the specific case of religious minorities, whose right to exist and to be protected is quite clearly acknowledged at the level of international law, even though recent legislation is not yet in force. However, it is difficult to talk about concrete, genuine

protection for minorities without speaking of the few pieces of legislation which do exist. This matter was also stressed in the statement by Mr. Paolo Fois, who started from the assumption that, historically speaking, religious minorities are at the very root of the problem of protection of minorities, a problem that is affected not only by the dualism between subjective rights and community rights but also by the concept of the minority as a subjective element, that is to say as the desire of an individual to belong to a minority, or an objective element, as the primordial existence of a community of individuals who, on historical, racial, religious or ethnic grounds, belong to a certain minority.

While recent legislation and proposals have not yet been implemented, except for the United Nations Declaration of last December, the principle is being introduced albeit tentatively and after lengthy theoretical discussion, that minorities can be afforded effective protection not only through recognition of the rights of the individual, which is valuable from the historical though not from the substantive point of view, but also by complementing the rights of the individual with a right that belongs to the minority as such.

The concept of minorities as a legal entity in the context of the protection of minorities is a frequently stated theoretical concept but was introduced for the first time into the text of the draft Convention on the Protection of Minorities, adopted at Venice two years ago by the European Committee for Democracy through Law and was taken up in more moderate terms in the recent United Nations Declaration.

Still on the topic of freedom of religion, a convention has at last been proposed specifically for the protection of freedom of religion. The idea has not been taken up by the coordinator, Professor Margiotta Broglio who, citing other recent declarations has reverted to the argument, which has been put several times, that protection is achieved not by multiplying laws and declarations but by putting the existing legal instruments into practice.

The third topic, the last of the Conference, was the legal situation of women and children in the family and in society.

The first paper, by Mrs. Creydt of the United Nations Office at Vienna, presented the topic with an exhaustive dissertation on the subject in relation to international law, and in particular, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It was highlighted, with a critical reading, because of the many reservations to the Convention and thus for the concrete limitations to its implementation. It was precisely to try and improve international regulation that the United Nations has proposed and will be making next year the year of the family.

It was said in conclusion that the situation of women was not only determined by the body of legislation at the international and the domestic levels but was also conditioned by custom, religion and the social conventions in different cultures. Hence it is not simply a problem connected with legal instruments but one which encompasses cultural identity in its broadest sense and more particularly custom, conventions, religion, etc. ...

The same theme was then addressed from the point of view of a Mediterrean country, Turkey again, by Mr. Ozsunay of Istanbul University. He reviewed all the arguments I have just mentioned, namely the evolution, the "Europeanization" of Turkish society and the complex Turkish legal system and consequently the processes of rapprochement with European regulations which are under way with regard to the protection of women and children, particularly in the various areas of the right to work, criminal law, and civil law. As to children, emphasis was placed on the difference in treatment in many societies, including Turkey, between children born in and out of wedlock. On the whole, the domestic legal situation is acceptable, but as always there is still a great deal to be done, especially in implementing existing legislation.

The same problems concerning the position of women in Tunisian society were taken up by Mr. Chamari. He said that the position of women in Tunisia is a singular one but can be placed in the context of the existing relationship between Islamic culture and western European culture. He described the gradual achievements in Tunisian society to ensure that women occupy a place that is non-discriminatory in relation to men. He also recalled that the achievements in terms of the law (perhaps not always in terms of implementation) must first of all be protected, i.e. maintained, because of the danger that some Islamic fundamentalist tendencies might manage to reduce women in Tunisia to a position worse than the present one. At the moment, it is vitally important to protect achievements rather than to try for total equality.

Women participate in the overall development of the country not merely in economic development but in the broadest sense of the term and, once more, as Professor Ben Abid recalled, it is not the Shariah which limits the social and cultural development of women in society but rather the way it is sometimes interpreted. As said in connection with the previous topic, the problem could be resolved by gradual change which must come, as pointed out many times before, from inside the country.

Mrs. Diana Culi, from Albania, talked about the situation of women in societies in transition, which meant referring specifically to those European countries currently changing over from a socialist regime to a market system. She pointed out how, in this rapid transition from a society with a socialist structure where, as other reports emphasized the State provides everything, even the right to work, to a market society, it is men who take control in the new democracy. The unemployment, inevitable in any attempt to change the structure of a socialist economy into a market economy meant that women are once more subjected to and inevitably economically dependent on men.

To find a solution to these problems it is necessary to take up the issue through NGO initiatives and above all to assist the process of economic development towards a market economy. Women suffer the consequences of this process.

The problem of family reunification, mentioned on numerous occasions, was addressed in almost all three topics, with regard to work, culture and the "position of women and children". As Professor Mehedi pointed out, the concept of the family which lies at the heart of the very concept of

reunification, is not necessarily a universal concept. Once more we are faced with a concept which is indicative of a civilization and of a culture, whether it is of the European kind or an Arab civilization in the Islamic world. Therefore, the problem should be addressed in the light of the fact that there are two possible approaches to the idea of the family and everything connected with it.

The subject of the protection of children and, in particular, the legal protection of children and women was addressed by Mr. Ghattas. He described the difficulties which arise in implementing these rights even from the legal point of view and he proposed a convention or some other kind of agreement to secure legal cooperation between the Mediterranean countries in matters pertaining to children.

Lastly, Mr. Charaf spoke vigorously about the difference between Islam and the West. He dwelt on the fundamental topic, mentioned earlier, of the universalism which contrasts with Islam, if universalism is interpreted in such a certain way as to allow for the diversity of culture which must be taken account of and should not forcibly lead to utopian unification. According to the Islamic view, the United Nations and other organizations claiming to be universal could not and should not concern themselves with these issues within States because they are matters reserved for the State concerned. He said that the position of women in Islamic culture is different and that the Islamic peoples are probably entirely happy to accept a situation that reflects their culture. He also recalled that even the concept of the family is different and that there is no pressing reason to change it. He finished with the conclusion that evolution is certainly desirable but, once more, the change should come from inside the country.

Mr. Charaf said that peoples with an Islamic culture should be encouraged to want to evolve. They should be given the opportunity to choose whether to maintain a position that might be archaic but traditionally Islamic or whether they want to evolve and, if so, in which direction.

As the debate showed, there are no legal limitations, indeed nothing at all in the Islamic system to prevent evolution. It is true that fundamentally, Islamic culture is different, as had been said many times before, in that the rights of men and women are of divine provenance, whereas in the western European system which we are discussing the rights of men and women are human rights, even in their affirmation and protection by the international legal instruments we all know.

In concluding the report of what has been said during this Conference, a report which is of necessity a summary and has certainly and somewhat inevitably omitted many things, for which I would like to apologise, I would venture to draw some personal conclusions after these three and a half days of work.

We set some objectives: we did not want to address the entire universe of human rights but just certain aspects; we did not want to resolve the problems of the Mediterranean but we wanted to start on a dialogue. Admittedly, as we have said on many occasions, we must foster the dialogue, but in the meantime it is important to begin it. I think I can say with some

personal satisfaction, which of course involves the whole organization of the Conference, that when we organized this Conference we were rather concerned.

In order to give the initiative some substance we selected three topics of interest to the Mediterranean of course, but topics that were also "delicate", even controversial, with ample potential for embarrassing blunder. The calibre of the speakers and all the participants has on the contrary shown that a constructive meeting without sterile polemic is not only possible in the abstract but feasible in practice.

As I pointed out in the introduction to the Conference, the Mediterranean is not an "international" region like those codified in the United Nations system, but it is nevertheless a shared setting, the cradle of modern civilization and a place where varied cultures meet.

The Mediterranean Basin, the group of States bordering it, can and must claim that title, distancing themselves from geo-political divisions, the North-South, East-West dividing lines, in order to constitute a centre for dialogue, an Athenian "agora", a Roman "forum", which, in an atmosphere of respect for the various cultures, can work and move towards an objective which is undoubtedly common to any civilization worthy of the name, namely, protection of the human being as the centre of the Universe.

As it has been throughout centuries, religions, cultures and arts have spread from the Mediterranean Basin, and so, today or maybe in the near future a human rights culture may spread throughout the world from this very area, a culture which will overcome artificial and psuedo-cultural political barriers in the common interests of mankind.

It is from this standpoint that the dialogue begun so promisingly here in Taormina must continue. The Messina International Centre and the Political Science Faculty are happy to bear witness to this to anyone who might want to hear.

And it is with this hope that we shall meet again at a second Mediterranean Conference that I will conclude my paper, with thanks to you all for the success of the initiative of which we can all be proud.

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